

Mary visits Elizabeth



Colour me!



Luke 1:39-56

A short time later Mary hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea. She went into Zechariah's home, where she greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, her baby moved within her. The Holy Spirit came upon Elizabeth.

Then in a loud voice she said to Mary: "God has blessed you more than any other woman! He has also blessed the child you will have. Why should the mother of my Lord come to me? As soon as I heard your greeting, my baby became happy and moved within me. The Lord has blessed you because you believed that he will keep his promise."

Mary said:

With all my heart I praise the Lord,
and I am glad because of God my Saviour.

He cares for me, his humble servant.

From now on, all people will say God has blessed me.

God All-Powerful has done great things for me, and his name is holy.

He always shows mercy to everyone who worships him.

The Lord has used his powerful arm to scatter those who are proud.

He drags strong rulers from their thrones and puts humble people in places of power.

God gives the hungry good things to eat, and sends the rich away with nothing.

He helps his servant Israel and is always merciful to his people.

The Lord made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his family for ever!

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months. Then she went back home.

Commentary

Mary's three-month stay with her cousin Elizabeth would have been a good time to stay away from prying eyes in Nazareth, where people might have started asking awkward questions about her pregnancy. It gave her a chance to hear for herself Elizabeth's story; and perhaps it also gave time for Joseph, at home, to get his head around all that had happened.

The moment when the two cousins meet is a very special one indeed. Baby John 'leaps' for joy inside Elizabeth, and Elizabeth speaks powerful words of blessing over Mary, while Mary herself bursts into song, expressing her amazement and humility about the fact that God has chosen to honour the poor and powerless like her in his plans to save the world. The two women must have been such a support to each other during this time, not just sharing the ups and downs of pregnancy but also encouraging each other in prayer and worship because God was doing such great things in their lives and, through them, for the world.

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Questions

- ▶ Elizabeth says several times that Mary is blessed. What does it mean to be blessed?
- ▶ What does Mary say about herself in her song, and what does she say about God?
- ▶ Elizabeth and Mary were not just relatives but also special friends. How can you be a special friend to someone?



Visual aid

The meeting of Elizabeth and Mary is known as ‘the visitation’ and there are many famous pieces of artwork based on this story. Find one from the internet and use it as a focus for the reading today.



Activity idea

We know what Elizabeth and Mary said to each other when they first met, but I wonder what other conversations happened over the next months. How did they spend their time? Create an imaginary diary of their time together – where they went, what they bought, what they prayed about and who they met.



Prayer idea

Mary’s song is also known as ‘the Magnificat’ (taken from the first word used in the Latin translation). It covers praise to God, thanks to God for his goodness, prayers to God for those who suffer because of powerful and oppressive governments, prayers for those who are facing hunger, and prayers for those who need special help at the moment. Use this as a pattern for prayer.

Key verse

With all my heart, I praise the Lord (Luke 1:46).

Old Testament story link

1 Samuel 2:1-10: This is what Hannah sang after she had received the gift of a child.



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